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*April 15 1875 of 50*

MODERN NECROMANCY: *d*

A SERMON

PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH, WASHINGTON CITY,  
APRIL 23, 1854.

BY

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*over*  
REV. C. M. BUTLER, D.D., RECTOR.

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## SERMON.

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“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

*Is. VIII. 19, 20.*

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Many persons, in our day, are fully persuaded that they can and do hold communication with the spirits of the departed. This conviction is widely extended and rapidly increasing.

“It is believed,” says a writer\* who has the best means of obtaining information upon this subject, “that the number of mediums in the United States must be several hundred thousands, and that in New York and its vicinity there must be from twenty-five to thirty thousands. There are ten or twelve newspapers devoted to the cause; and the spiritual library embraces more than one hundred different publications, some of which have already attained a circulation of more than ten thousand copies.”

The subject has become one of practical importance to the Church of God. The ministers of Christ cannot properly remain silent upon the subject. The Church and the public have a right to know whether they think “this thing is of God or of men.”

In treating of the subject I shall assume the supreme authority of the sacred Scriptures. It is a christian congregation that I address, and my object is to show them that they cannot adhere to christianity and at the same

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\*Judge Edmonds.

time believe in the reality of these pretended spiritual manifestations. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

## I.

The whole tenor of scripture is opposed to the idea that the spirits of the departed linger near, and can open communications with, our world. They are described as "going hence,"\* "departing,"† "returning to God,"‡ being "with Christ,"|| and "in Paradise,"§ "absent from the body," "present with the Lord."¶

There is no intimation that they can come back to this our earth. On the contrary, the Scriptures plainly state that departed spirits do not return. David said of the lost child, over whom he wept with broken and remorseful heart, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, *but he shall not return to me.*"\*\* "Cease, then," said Job, "and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little *before I go whence I shall not return.*"†† And, again, "When a few years are come, then I shall *go the way whence I shall not return.*"‡‡ The christian world, deriving its impressions from sacred writ, have always spoken of the spirit world as "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns."

The New Testament is no less explicit than the Old. It represents the righteous dead as fixed, enclosed, sheltered, in what in various places is called "a city," "a house," "a country," "a place," and by St. Peter "a prison," or a watch-tower of safety and of anticipation. From this place the parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches us

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\* Psalm xxix, 13.

|| Phil. i, 23.

\*\* 2 Sam. xii, 25.

† Gen. xxxv, 18.

§ Luke, xxiii, 43.

†† Job, x, 20.

‡ Eccl. xii, 7.

¶ 2 Corin. v, 8.

‡‡ Job, xvi, 22.

that it is not allowed them, even for a brief period and a blessed and benevolent object, to depart. The rich man, in torment, desired that Abraham might be sent to his brethren on earth, to warn them lest they should come to the same wretched end. It was not permitted. It was expressly said that they had Moses and the prophets; and that these were the only influences and aids which would be granted to deter them from sin and hell. It was added that these were sufficient; and that if not convinced by them, neither would they be persuaded, though one went to them from the dead. This is testimony directly to the point, and, if scripture is to decide the point, perfectly conclusive.

It is to be remarked, moreover, that among all the strange and miraculous events of both dispensations, there is not one instance on record of the manifestation of a disembodied human spirit to the minds of men. Samuel appeared to Saul under the incantations of the witch of Endor, as much to the surprise of the sorceress as to the terror of the impious king. But it was not the disembodied spirit of the prophet which manifested itself to Saul. It was his body, or a visible representation of his body, which God miraculously summoned for his own wise purposes. Moses and Elias appeared *in visible forms*, talking with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. At the time of the Savior's crucifixion, it was not the disembodied spirits of the saints that revisited the earth, and peeped and muttered and rapped through floors and tables at Jerusalem; but it was "the *bodies* of the saints that arose and appeared unto many." There is not, amid all the miraculous appearances of angels, and of men temporarily summoned from the regions of the dead, which are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, a single instance of a disembodied human spirit manifesting itself on earth

and communicating with men. Had there been miraculous manifestations of departed spirits recorded in the Bible, it would have been an unwarrantable conclusion that we might still look for them after the age of miracles was past. But it is surely a striking fact in full disproof of these pretended spiritual communications, that there is not an instance of the manifestation of a disembodied spirit to men on earth.

Nor is it a less significant fact, that those spirits which left the body and returned to it again—and that St. Paul, when (whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell) he was caught up into the third heaven—give no description of the state of things in the spirit-world. Our blessed Lord, when his Spirit returned from its sojourn in Paradise, did not announce to his disciples, or leave on record, an account of the condition of disembodied spirits. He added nothing from his own observations to the revelation which was made, and to be made, in reference to the departed. St. Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and the things which he saw there were things “which it was not lawful to utter.” Lazarus, when his spirit returned from Hades, gave no description, to be transmitted to after times, of that mysterious abode. This reserve is not without deep significance. It seems to intimate, that as enough was revealed for knowledge, for profit, for salvation, nothing would be revealed for the gratification of mere carnal curiosity. God has told us all that it is needful and comforting for us to know of that spirit-world; but from no spirit that has joined it have we ever had a message as to the condition, the pursuits, the joys, or the sorrows of its inhabitants.



## II.

But some have supposed that if we deny that the unaccountable phenomena connected with what are called spiritual manifestations have a supernatural origin, we must also reject the miracles of the Bible. The statement is sometimes made in this plausible form: "We believe in the existence of a spiritual world on the ground of miracles. Here are supernatural phenomena which prove the same thing. Why not accept these miraculous evidences also, for the same already acknowledged truth?"

For good and obvious reasons we cannot accept them. Observe how different in reality, though made to seem the same in words, the cases are! Here is a visible agent in the form of man, who asserts that he is God's agent, to tell us truth and duty, and to reveal to us a spirit-world. "Prove to us," we say to him, "that you are God's agent and speak for him. Prove to us that you have God's power, and speak to us in behalf of God." He does prove it by working miracles. He reverses the established natural laws of the universe. No one can do this but God, or those to whom God gives the power. We are sure then that this messenger is of God. The proof is perfect. We must accept his testimony; we must believe his teachings. He came to teach great moral truths; to announce a plan of salvation; to put in operation a scheme of saving mercy. The great object of Christ's mission, and therefore of the miracles which proved its divinity, was not to reveal the *existence* of a spirit-world—which was already believed—but to show how man might be prepared to enter upon it in peace and safety. His miracles have an object worthy of miracles. We believe the great plan of redemption which is attested by them; and we believe all that is revealed in reference to the spirit-world.

But now, how different is the case with these so-called spiritual manifestations! Instead of a known and visible agent working a miracle to prove the truth of his assertion, we have only certain physical and psychological phenomena; and the question with regard to them is—what is their cause? Are they natural or supernatural? Have they an agent? If they have, who is he? What is he? Where is he? In the latter case we are in search of the agent. In the former we see the agent! In the latter we ask for the cause of the phenomena. In the former we see the cause! In the latter we raise the question—is this a natural or supernatural effect? In the former we see that it is supernatural. In the latter all that we can see is, that the phenomena are beyond any at present known *natural laws*—not that they *reverse* natural laws. In the former we see that they *reverse* natural laws, and are therefore strictly *miracles*. There is not the slightest resemblance between the miracles of Christianity and the so-called supernaturalism of spiritual manifestations. In the one we see an agent doing something, and in the other we see something done, and ask where and what is the agency? In the one we see evident, beneficent and amazing miracles, wrought for the great and worthy purpose of revealing moral truth, and showing how we may be prepared happily to enter the solemn realm of souls. In the other we see trivial, clumsy, confused, contradictory, unintelligible phenomena, adduced in proof of truths better known before, and teachings which, when true, are but the elements of higher knowledge already in possession, and which, when false, are but the old and familiar articles of the creed which human depravity and ignorance have ever adopted.

From these remarks it is evident why we refuse to accept these phenomena as confirmatory proof of the already

admitted fact of a spirit-world. When it is asked, "why, admitting that there is a world of departed human spirits, and admitting that angelic spirits have visited the earth, and now minister to man—why should you deny or disbelieve that the departed human soul should renew his intercourse with earth?" We answer, "because the same authority which assures us of the existence of souls after death, and of the visits of angels to our world, assures us also that human souls cannot communicate with us after death." This is our present and sufficient answer. Whatever might be the character of the communications which purported to be from departed spirits, we could not, for this sufficient reason, believe them. But when we come to look into the character of those communications, we shall have abundant additional reasons for rejecting them.

### III.

But not only does the sacred Scripture announce the impossibility of holding communication with the spirits of the departed, but it denounces the attempt as impious.

Moses, in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy, thus writes: "When thou art come into the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all these things are an abomination unto the Lord." Here are eight different species of pretended supernatural power exerted by those who professed to have obtained most of them by intercourse with spirits, which were denounced by God as an abomination to him. It comes within my present purpose to notice only two general modes of pretended communications with the spiritual world. "The

consulter of familiar spirits," "the witch," and "the wizard," all professed to divine and to work wonders by the aid of spirits or demons. The same desire to pry into the future and to know more than can be known by nature, which gives rise to the modern "witch-man" in Africa, and to all pretenders to supernatural power and knowledge in heathen lands, no doubt gave rise to these diviners among the ancient heathen nations that surrounded Israel. The Jews were often enticed into these impieties and abominations. God denounced them and affixed to them the most fearful penalties. His law was, "'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.'" "Rebellion," he says, "is as the sin of witchcraft," thereby indicating the nature of the sin. It is *rebellion* against God, seeking knowledge and asking aid, and depending upon the power, not of God in the way of his appointment, but from other beings. It is enumerated by St. Paul as among the most gross and fatal works of the flesh. "Sorcerers" are classed by St. John with the "abominable and murderers and whoremongers and idolators," who are to have "their part in the lake of fire." The New Testament contains a few instances of sorcerers—Simon of Samaria, Elymas, the sorcerer, at Paphos, and the damsel that had a spirit of divination. I do not know that any of the modern mediums profess to have communications with any spirits, good or evil, except departed human spirits and the spirits of departed animals.\*

But this pretension to communicate with and consult the spirits of departed human beings is classed with and denounced in the same terms as is that of the consulter of familiar spirits. In the passage from Deuteronomy, it is enumerated among those pretensions to divination which

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\* Spirit Rapping Unveiled, page 143.

are called an abomination to the Lord. It is called necromancy, from *nekros*, the dead, and *manteia*, prophecy. The proper name then of those who profess to consult the dead, is not Mediums, but Necromancers. They are classed with wizards and those that have familiar spirits in the text. "And when they shall say unto you seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards, that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living unto the dead?" That is, "should the living resort for knowledge unto the dead? Should they not resort unto their God?" From this language it is evident that the wizards who peeped and muttered, and resorted to familiar spirits, professed also to bring the living to the dead for knowledge.

Now, whether we are right or not in supposing that these ancient Necromancers *did not in reality hold* intercourse with the dead—whether this spiritual communication was real or pretended—certain it is, that in either case it was entirely prohibited by God. It was considered by him a presumptuous and rebellious sin. It was classed among the most gross and deadly offences against the majesty of God.

#### IV.

There are those who are deeply persuaded of the evil and the sin of these supposed spiritual manifestations, who are solemnly impressed with the belief that they are the work of evil spirits. They believe that evil spirits pretend to be human, and under this guise convey instructions with regard to the spirit-world and the method of salvation, which are directly contrary to the word of God. Some books have been written on this theory. It is surely a safer belief than that which regards these communications as the work of human spirits. I find myself unable to

adopt it. I should be compelled to change all my views of the permitted agency of evil spirits in our world. Whatever that agency may be, I cannot believe that they are now allowed to produce any physical or miraculous effects. Their action is on the mind and heart of the man who yields himself to sin and them. When, as in Apostolic days, they were permitted to possess the bodies and souls of men, there was also a visible miraculous power to counteract and overthrow them. There was a temporary and exceptional power granted to them at that time, that the power of Christ might be magnified in their overthrow, and the power and authority of the Apostles seen from the fact "that the spirits were subject unto them." It was permitted that the Christians of all ages might be impressed with a conviction of their existence and evil agency, and assured that so great was the power of Christ, that nothing should by any means hurt them. When miraculous powers ceased in the church, this temporarily permitted power of evil spirits also ceased. If we should believe in its present existence, we should be driven to look for a present miraculous counteractive power—a power of exorcism—in the church. We should remember, moreover, that there are good as well as evil spirits, and that they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. If, therefore, evil spirits are permitted to deceive us and palm themselves off as the spirits of our departed friends, we may be sure, I think, that good spirits would be permitted to undeceive us and guard us against their wiles. The same degree of obviousness which belonged to the one class we should expect to find in the other. They that are *for us* are more than they that be against us. But though I cannot believe that evil spirits have any direct agency in these manifestations, I have a very solemn conviction that the great enemy of our souls,

acting on the *minds* of those who are ready to give ear to some other teaching than the law and the testimony, fosters the belief that these supposed spiritual communications are real; because he can thus more effectually than in any other way counteract the blessed and saving truth as it is in Jesus. When we come to see what is the *character* of these alleged communications, we shall readily perceive what interest the great enemy of souls has in promoting the delusion that they are real.

## V.

When we examine the *character* of the communications which profess to come from the spirit-world, we shall find abundant and overwhelming reasons for rejecting them.

It is a sufficient reason to reject them, that almost all—all with scarcely any exceptions—which have been published to the world, plainly contradict the most precious truths of the Bible. With a view to prepare for this discourse, I have looked over a large number of these alleged communications. Amidst the mass of puerilities, absurdities, stupidities, vulgarities, and blasphemies, which would disgrace any ordinary intellect while in the body, I have yet to meet with more than *one* in which the pretended spirit professes to have been saved by the atonement, and to be in the presence of the Redeemer. The book of Judge Edmonds explicitly asserts, that these spiritual manifestations plainly prove “that it is no vicarious atonement that is to redeem us; but that we are to work out our own salvation.” It denies all the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel. In the midst of these spirits we find ourselves in society very different from that glorious company whom St. John represents as casting their crowns before the throne, and singing the new song to the Lamb that hath redeemed and washed them in his blood. Spirits that pro-

fess to be happy and progressing towards perfection testify that matter is eternal; that man never fell; that he does not need a re-creating spirit; that Jesus Christ was a mere man and a reformer; that he made no atonement; that he never rose from the dead; that he never wrought miracles; that the Bible is the work of disembodied spirits, and not of God; that it is a bad book, full of errors and impieties; that there is no such place as hell; that there will be no resurrection and no judgment; that churches should be broken up; that civil governments should be abolished; that the marriage institution should be done away.\* Now these, in a vast majority of cases, with scarcely an exception, are the *kind* of communications which are, it is professed, received from spirits. If they come from spirits, surely they are lying spirits. What saith the Scripture? "Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which ye have received, let him be accursed!" If an angel should teach these things, we would reject him and them. How much more then spirits that peep and mutter, and clumsily rap and write out these awful blasphemies!

But it is a reason to reject them because not "even *so* do their witnesses agree together." A writer upon this subject, who has turned over thousands of pages of these spiritual communications, asserts that he has found but a solitary instance in which reference is made to Jesus as a divine Savior; to the sinfulness of man, and need of the Spirit, and all the peculiarities of the gospel scheme.† I have heard from private sources of a few other cases. Now here is a disagreement among the spirits. Indeed their teachings are of the most diverse character. Unitarianism, Universalism, Swedenborgianism, Transcendentalism, Socialism, and every variety of opinion that is found on earth,

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\*Spirit Rapping Unveiled, p. 83—101.

†Author of Spirit Rapping Unveiled.



is found among these spirits. How is this? These happy spirits must know *now* how they were saved and what is true. If these communications came from spirits in the other world, they would certainly all know, and all know alike, what is the truth upon these subjects. If they came from those who now "know even as they are known," who "see face to face," then, although one spirit might know more than another, they would never contradict each other. Those who profess to be in the same spheres, give us different statements on these subjects. How is this? Who shall decide when spirits disagree? Until they agree among themselves, we may be excused in believing none of them.

It is a reason to reject them, that they all seem to take their character from the medium through whom they are communicated. They express his feelings and opinions, and rise no higher in their tone than the mind of the medium, or of the person in communication with him. In one instance to which reference was made, in which a pretended spirit used an evangelical phraseology and uttered gospel truths—the medium was a pious Methodist. On one occasion, in the same room, a departed spirit through a Roman Catholic medium declared that there was a purgatory, and that it was essential to pass through its cleansing fires; while another spirit through a Protestant medium insisted, by the most energetic raps, that there was no purgatory.\* And so in all those cases which I have heard of, in which truly pious sentiments have been expressed, they came through a medium or to an enquirer who entertained them. So clearly does the communication take its hue and character from the medium, or the person communicating through him, that when George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin and Henry Clay, communicate through,

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\*This occurred in Montreal, and was stated by a gentleman of that city.

or are summoned by, an illiterate medium, they not only utter deplorable nonsense, but they use bad grammar; they spell incorrectly, they write in a most vulgar style. I have been unable to find any instances in which the style and character of communication seem at all above the capacity of the medium. It is true that Judge Edmonds and Dr. Dexter, and Governor Tallmadge, speak in raptures of certain revelations from Lord Bacon, Swedenborg, and Daniel Webster, as far transcending not only their own intellects, but those of Plato and all the philosophers of the world. But I think they do themselves great injustice. They are too intelligent gentlemen not to have known all that those communications reveal before they were made; for when they are intelligible, they do but reproduce the sentiments or dreams with which the world has been long familiar. What is the use of hearing from the other world, if we hear only the conflicting opinions that prevail in this? What is the use of hearing through a medium from a spirit just the same kind of sentiments that we might hear from the medium without the spirit?

It is a reason for rejecting these communications, that they are very often erroneous. They fail to tell the truth. It has occurred in hundreds of instances, that from what professed to be departed spirits there have been a great number of erroneous answers. They have not known when they died, and many other facts of a similar kind, which they must have known had they been the spirits of the departed. Some persons have summoned uncles and aunts, and other beings that never existed, and had long conversations with them. All these failures and mistakes and absurdities, which greatly outnumber the answers which are correct, are forgotten by the credulous. But these spirits have no right to make any mistakes, to give any

false testimony. If more than half of their statements are false, how can we put any confidence in the remainder?

The answer which is made to this objection is itself another reason for rejecting these communications. It is said by some communications that there are low and lying spirits, mischievous disembodied imps, who come and pretend to be the spirits that they are not, and tell falsehoods and make mistakes and create confusion. But how can we know which they are? How can we know but that they who say this themselves deceive us? We are all in the dark. We cannot see the spirits. One spirit's residence and farm—(for Swedenborg, through Dr. Dexter, says they *have* houses and farms\*)—lies next to that of the spirit of your friend, and he becomes acquainted with your friend's history, and comes under a table and answers your questions correctly, and pretends to *be* your friend. How are you to know that it is not he? How can you be assured that some facetious spirit is not representing the spirit of your friend, and amusing himself at your expense? There is no test by which to "try the spirits!"

It is a reason for rejecting these communications, that they make such popular spirits as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Jackson, and some others, communicate through mediums thousands of miles apart at the same instant. This is a species of ubiquity not enjoyed even by the angels. Ubiquity is a prerogative of God. These spirits are so often summoned, that for the last year they must have spent a large part of their time out of Paradise, and under tables and floors—knocking. It is amazing that any person in his right mind should believe that these great men could be, at the same time, answering the summons of every ignorant and credulous

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\*Spiritualism, page 197.

person from California to New York and from Maine to Georgia, and that they should spend whole evenings in slowly rapping out a few sentences of unimportant intelligence, or of sentimental and mystical absurdity, of which they would have been ashamed on earth.

It is another reason for rejecting these communications, that they exhibit none of the increased vigor of intellect which we are led to believe will belong to our glorified being. On the contrary, these revelations exhibit a melancholy falling off in mental power, in clearness of thought, and purity of style. In the appendix to Judge Edmonds's volume there are inserted some communications said to have been made to Governor Tallmadge by Daniel Webster. It is stated by the Governor, that it "was well remarked by a gentleman of the highest order of intellect present, after the communications closed, that he had read all the old philosophers from Plato down to Bacon, and had never seen any thing equal to these communications." Now, I venture to say, that any man of ordinary sense, not infected with this new witchcraft, who had not read either Plato or Bacon, but had read Mr. Webster's published volumes, would at once assert, that while on earth Mr. Webster never wrote a half page of such unmitigated absurdity as these pretended communications. I am tempted to give a specimen of what is considered the very highest and sublimest style of spiritual communications. I quote a passage which one of the disciples present praised as peculiarly clear and strong, and like Mr. Webster.

"If you will keep open we will give you ideas of life which you have not yet received. It is the active part of light we cling to; and you can as much see it as the light that incites it to action. Life is the active principle, and light the essence of that principle. We can extract principle-essences as you extract wine from the grape. Put

some principle under the press, such as life, motion, &c., by compressing them we get or rather let out the light, and it flies away, and we have the hulls of life, motion, &c., left us for our trouble.”\*

All about light—but very dark. Surely the “light is let out” and flown away. And this is the stuff that is to throw Christianity into the shade! This is the style in which the great, clear intellect of Webster now speaks! “The active part of light.” “Light the essence of life.” “The *hulls of life*,” “the *hulls of motion*.” But I seem to be rebuked by the remembered majestic presence of that great man for repeating, even in the way of illustration, such poor, unintelligible mysticism as from him. If we do really hear from our great men who have departed from this world, it is very discouraging to find how much they have deteriorated in intellect. If these communications are real, they add to all other apprehensions of death the not unreasonable fear that we shall progress in the wrong direction.

It is a reason for rejecting these communications, that they abound with contradictions, puerilities and absurdities, which are inconceivable to those who have not examined the subject, and to which it would be unpardonable for me in this place even to allude, were it not that I earnestly desire to deter my friends from giving heed to these lying wonders, by showing that their folly is equal to their wickedness.

From the publication of Judge Edmonds, Dr. Dexter, and Governor Tallmadge—which is altogether the most able and respectable of these productions which I have seen—which professes to contain revelations from Lord Bacon and Swedenborg, I have gleaned and thrown to-

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\*Spiritualism, page 396.

gether without order from amidst a multitude of similar absurdities and contradictions the following.

The spirits of Swedenborg and Bacon, though professing to come from the 7th sphere, and to be at liberty to choose their own residence according to their taste and the degree of their development, yet constantly give us their impressions, their opinions, their arguments, and not their *knowledge* of the state of things in the spheres.\* They frequently confess their ignorance.† They contradict themselves. They postpone answers to questions and say they will consult some of the older spirits.‡ At one time Swedenborg says, that the spirit when it leaves the flesh has a new body waiting it, into which it enters. At another time, when hard pressed with the idea that the soul evolves from itself a new body, he yields to the argument, and thinks it must be so.§ On several occasions the Judge has the better of the argument, and the discomfited spirit, a little out of humor, remonstrates with him, on his wish to reconcile and harmonize all the revelations.|| It is announced that spirits have material bodies and occupy material abodes.¶ Bad and undeveloped spirits are said to be almost black.\*\* The good spirits communicate with us for their own improvement and advancement. Judge Edmonds's departed wife professes to have been much advanced by communications with him.†† The happiness of departed spirits and their unhappiness is much affected by our own.‡‡ The progressive spirits "suffer more of what may be called hell" than the degraded spirits.|||| The spirits did not say much against the pretensions of Christ at first, because they did not want to shock the prejudices of the Christian world. §§

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\*Spiritualism, page 126.

§ Id., 265.

\*\* Id., 169.

||| Id., 232.

† Id., 148.

|| Id., 117.

†† Id., 182.

§§ Id., 209.

‡ Id., 129.

¶ Id., 175.

‡‡ Id., 178.

Lord Bacon says that his reasonings in relation to Jesus Christ must "be accepted for what they are worth, as he could not give the true history of his birth and life and mission." He says it is known to spirits in a higher position than his own, and that there is as much difference of opinion about him in the spheres as on earth.\* Swedenborg tells us—and I think it not at all an attractive announcement—that he and other spirits deliver lectures in the spheres.† In the early part of the day the spirits study and hear lectures, or discharge the duties connected with their condition; and in the after part of the day they visit friends in the spheres or friends on earth. Spirits in the higher spheres eat but about once in a week.‡ If the spirit suffer pain, "it arises from some violation of the organic part of its body."|| In the dark spheres they have fire, but in the upper spheres they have no need of it. "They have no money, and the land is subdivided into communities or neighborhoods, and in them the land is again laid out in parcels for each to till for the benefit of all." The government is patriarchal, and the patriarch is an invisible spirit who communicates by impression or by oral statements.§ In short, they are Socialists. Such are some of the features of this new revelation. Of stuff like this the book is full. Other publications from less intelligent sources have far grosser follies than even these. By such stuff it is that professed Christians, according to the express speaking of the Spirit, through St. Paul, "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." I pray you, brethren, "refuse these profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourselves rather unto godliness."

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\* Spiritualism, page 213.

† Id., 278.

|| Id., 279.

‡ Id., 277.

§ Id., 279.

It is a reason for rejecting these communications, that they had done no one good, and have worked awful evil. They have brought sorrow into many homes. They have sent their deluded disciples from the spiritual circles into the mad-house. They have overthrown many fine intellects, and withered many noble hearts.

And what have all these pretended revelations added to our knowledge? What idea, true or false, is now in the world, that was not here before? Not one! The sum of all their verbose and mystic teaching, so far as it is moral or religious—all the “principle-essence” that can be extracted from them, like wine from the grape, is this: “It is a good thing to be good, and after death we shall progress in goodness.” It needs no ghost, come from the grave, to tell us this! When these teachings come through an illiterate medium, they are very much like the dying confessions of some poor criminal, who has repented of his sin and professes to be at peace. When they come through Judge Edmonds, and others of the same class of minds, it is a kind of tipsy Swedenborgianism.

How reviving and elevating it is to turn from these puerilities to the true revelation! “I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord.” “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.” “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” In these few words there is more to enlighten the mind, to fill the heart, and to satisfy the aspirations of our spiritual nature, than all that has yet reached us from the seven-times-seven circles of the seven spheres.



The christian representation of the condition of the spirits of our departed friends who died in Christ, is soothing, satisfying, and delightful. They are at rest in Paradise. The sorrows and trivialties of this world do not reach them. They are amid holy beings. They consort with angels. They see the Savior. They await in happy anticipation "their perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in everlasting glory." Now how degrading a conception it is that these pure spirits, occupying a nobler sphere of being, and enjoying loftier associations and fellowships, should be hovering near our earth; should be cognizant of and disturbed by our petty cares and sorrows; should act the part of newsmonger and fortune-teller; should peep and mutter under floors and tables; should struggle to communicate with us in modes so gross and repulsive, and with communications which are of so little worth; and should exhibit so little of the elevation and the glorious intelligence, and the beautiful gifts, which we should expect from those who are to be equal to the angels. That minds which know nothing of the sublime spiritualities of the gospel should have been drawn into these delusions, is not strange; but that all Christians who have known and meditated upon the spiritual world revealed in the Bible should not at once, from the instincts of their new nature, reject this spurious and imaginary world of spirits, seems surprising. The word of God has warned us against these errors. "Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." The church has thus far been almost entirely exempt from this delusion. It has been in the hands of infidels, visionaries, and filthy dreamers. Some, however, as the apostle foretold, have given heed to these seducing spirits, "and have denied the faith." I see not how a thorough believer in these pretended spir-

itual revelations can retain belief in the old revelation. They are contradictory in their statements, and utterly alien to each other in their spirit.

## VI.

But, it is asked, "if these communications are not from spirits, from what source do they come?" They are from *some* intelligence—an intelligence seemingly superior, in its knowledge of *facts*, past and to come, to that of man. What and whose intelligence is it? These are questions for the philosopher, the physiologist, the psychologist, and the physician. The theologian and the preacher do their part in this investigation, when they show that these phenomena are not to be referred to the spirits of the departed. The opinion of one who has personally witnessed none of these phenomena, and who has but scanty knowledge of those branches of science which are involved in them, would be little worth. I have no hesitation in saying, however, that many of the phenomena connected with this state of trance, or mesmerism, or odyc fluid, have not received, and I doubt whether they ever will receive, a full and intelligible explanation. It is in vain to say that it is *all deception*. There has been much deception; but many of the most remarkable of these phenomena have been undoubted, and rest upon testimony that is perfectly unexceptionable. When the folly and delusion which have connected them with the spirit-world shall have ceased, it may be that something like these results will be reached and rested in, through the labors of philosophy and science. It may be found that there is an abnormal condition in which the mind and the body, especially of persons of highly nervous temperament, may be placed, in which the mind acts without being conscious of its action, and that this condition is connected with an undue excitement of the nervous

influence, which will be found to constitute a principle different from electricity or galvanism, and which has already received the name of the *odyc fluid*, which can pass from human bodies into material things, and move them; and which, as in the case of the phenomena of biology, uniting a person of strong nervous organization with a weak one, brings the mind of the weaker under the temporary dominion of the stronger.

Such a theory as this may, ere long, be generally received, and a multitude of facts may confirm its truth. But that the *rationale* of *all* the wonderful phenomena of our day can be satisfactorily explained by it, I have no hope. Nor is my mind, nor should any mind, be in the least degree disturbed by the fact that there are mysteries connected with our mental and spiritual and corporeal nature, which are inexplicable. When a man has explained to me all the mysteries and unintelligibilities of my compound nature, when in its natural or normal state, it will be time for him to demand that we should either explain all the still more obscure phenomena which are connected with an unnatural condition, when thrown into trance, or under an undue and unhealthy nervous influence, or refer them to the presence and agency of spirits. I am not attempting to explain these phenomena, but only to indicate the direction and method in which an explanation may possibly be found. A general cause for them all may be discovered, though the *rationale* of some particular instances under that general cause it may not be possible to trace.

Indeed these phenomena, which are now referred to spirits, due doubtless to natural laws and powers not yet, and perhaps never to be, fully understood, have appeared in all ages of the world; and under the names of sorcery, demonolgy, magic, witchcraft, and inspiration, have be-

wildered and terrified individuals and generations. The student upon this subject will find the phenomena of the present day in the abominations of the heathen denounced in the Old Testament, in the magicians of Egypt, in the wonders of Indian magic, in the oracles of Greece and Rome, in the sorceries and incantations of the northern nations, in the witchcraft of Salem, and in the Jumpers of Kentucky. "There is no new thing under the sun."

My friends and brethren, I have brought this subject to your attention because much interest has been excited in regard to it in this community, and because I have been requested to express my views, and because I fear that some of you may be led, thoughtlessly, from curiosity and with no idea of its impropriety, to tamper with this impious delusion of communicating with spirits, to the injury of your own souls and the souls of others. I earnestly entreat you, under the persuasion that it is a crime denounced by God, not to allow yourselves either to act as mediums, or to be present where others are professing to act as mediums, or in any way to countenance this dangerous delusion. Allow yourselves to make no experiments in reference to these phenomena, and to witness none, unless it be distinctly understood that it is done in the belief that they are referable to natural laws. In the present state of the public mind I believe it would be wise not to meddle with them at all, but to leave them altogether in the hands of men of science. As these phenomena cannot be realized except in the case of undue and unnatural excitement of the nervous system, I believe them injurious to the health alike of the body and of the mind. Some who have begun these experiments in curiosity have ended them in madness. No good has hitherto resulted to any human being from all these alleged communications. I pray you

let them alone. Refuse to have any thing to do with them. If you would meditate upon and hear from the spirit-world, go to your Bible. One page of that will give you clearer and more satisfactory views of it than all the revelations of necromancers and wizards since the world began. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Remember the solemn language of St. John, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world."

How solemn are these words! From whatsoever spirits these communications may have come, they do not abide the test proposed by St. John, and therefore are not to be received.

My friends, you must make your choice between the system of the Gospel and this system of pretended spiritual manifestations. They cannot both be long held together. If you give up the Gospel, then what have you for your joy in life, and your peace in death? You have a system which is a mere earthly answer to the questions of an earth-born curiosity. You have before your mistaken hope successive spheres of being which are but a reproduction, scarcely elevated or improved, of the life of earth.

You have before you imaginary worlds in which sorrow and imperfection enter. But for the real wants of your immortal and spiritual nature there is no provision. Oh, at the solemn hour when your soul shall stand on the border of the eternal world, it will need something more than to be amused with vague pictures of spheres of being, the existence of which your credulity has accepted on the most illusive evidence, and in which re-appear all the uncertainties, the trivialities, the conflicting opinions, and the sorrows of the present world; and in which the soul is still banished far off from God, its Father! In that dread hour the real want of your soul will be forgiveness of conscious sin, and renewal for a nature which you will then know to be unholy. The cry of your spirit will be for pardon, purity, the presence of God, the absence of all evil and all imperfections—for a world of complete blessedness, for fellowship with angels and with just men made perfect. When these delusions shall stand before your disenchanted soul in all their earthly and carnal grossness, and the great truths of the Gospel, long neglected and disowned, shall shine into it, with self-evidencing brightness, you shall see as by one broad flash of light the true condition of your own soul, and the true nature of that future for which its wing is spread—oh then this poor earth-born gospel, which tells you of the soul's self-development and progress, will be but the dread announcement that your spirit, dead in sin, unpardoned, unreconciled to God, shall go on in a career of accumulating wretchedness; and thus the promise of the false new gospel, harmonizing with the announcement of the true and olden Gospel, shall make your shuddering heart believe and see, ere yet you realize, in your sad experience the solemn truth of both evangels, "That whatso-

ever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."











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